

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Road Map
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1 Corinthians 9:7-12,19-23
October 17, 2021

Look what Christian freedom does. It serves in love.

- 501 years ago Luther published: ***On the Freedom of a Christian*** - November 1520
 - ◆ Best known for this profound paradox:
 - **A Christian is a free Lord over all things, subject to no one.**
 - **A Christian is a dutiful Servant of all things and subject to everyone.**
 - ◆ What was Luther saying?
 - Know what enslaved: the Accuser, guilt, fear, death, punishment, Old Self
 - The Christian, declared righteous in Christ, is **freed from** these taskmasters
 - **Freed from** the Law - its slavish demands for obedience, judgment, and guilt
 - **Freed to** be Jesus' servant. **Freed to** live the new life serving Jesus = freedom
 - No longer a slave of the Old Self: self-centered, self-absorbed
 - The self that found *doing what I want* enslaved me to desires and emptiness.
 - The freed Christian uses freedom to serve in Jesus' name. Truly liberated!
 - ◆ History is full of people misusing the freedom of Christ for their purposes
 - The peasants of Europe claimed *Christian freedom* from the feudal system
 - Americans: equated *Christian freedom* and the freedoms of our Bill of Rights.
 - Enslaved and blinded by the obsession: *I have the right to do as I want!*
 - The spirit of a Christian servant cannot survive with that mindset

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- ❖ Paul explains and models the Freedom of a Christian
 - By God's design it was right for Paul to be supported by the Christians he served.
 - ◆ *right* in the sense of his rightful (according to God's will) claim
 - Paul opted not to exercise his right so as not to hinder the gospel
 - Paul explains his approach as a dutiful servant of Jesus.
 - ◆ Paul met people where they were. Respect, love, care like Jesus. Same mission
 - ◆ Using his freedom *so that I might gain....*, i.e. to rescue the enslaved
 - ◆ Meeting people where they were to understand their struggles, hurts, and slavery to death, fear, and sin - what enslaved them, so Jesus could set them free from these.
 - ◆ Our Lord met with the social outcasts - those treated with contempt and hatred.
 - Jesus felt their hurt and pain and came to set them free from their captivity
 - Ostracizing those caught in sin leaves them in Satan's clutches.
 - To demand that people conform to be like us before we accept them - hopeless
 - Jesus' mercy - pity for their pitiful condition - offers a way out - his redemption.
 - Jesus' care for the outcasts never sanctioned their sin promoting slavery & death!
 - Those who suggest Jesus *welcomed sinners* = approving, don't know sin's toll
 - Likewise Paul used his freedom to meet people where they were to set them free.
- Christians who've been freed by Jesus from fear, death, & Satan, the Great Accuser:
 - ◆ recognize themselves in every sinner. Our hearts ache for them in their slavery.
 - ◆ live to serve Jesus, meeting people where they are to set them free with the gospel.
 - ◆ **A Christian is a free Lord over all things, subject to no one.**
 - ◆ **A Christian is a dutiful Servant of all things and subject to everyone.**

- ❖ Be careful not to misuse this Scripture - with simplistic applications
 - Christians with a genuine zeal to rescue the lost have advocated that the Sunday gathering for worship should be designed to serve the unchurched.
 - ◆ To meet the unchurched where they are
 - ◆ Sounds noble. Who could argue against it? Consider what Paul really said.
 - Paul isn't talking about turning the gathering into outreach. He goes to them.
 - When the worship service gives the unchurched what they want:
 - ◆ their self-absorbed self-centered mindset is put in the driver's seat as master.
 - ◆ That doesn't set them free. It endorses their lording ways.
 - ◆ Jesus cannot set you free if you think you are free to have Jesus on your terms.
 - Besides, notice all the different groups Paul speaks of.
 - ◆ Meeting one where they are leaves the others to feel like outsiders.
 - If the gathering is reduce to *beginner level Christianity*, how will the flock mature and grow in Christ?
 - ◆ How will those we seek to gain be set free from thinking like a child and wanting like a child - to become mature in Christ? 1 Corinthians 14:20
 - It is a simplistic *solution* because it is all based on a simplistic understanding of what it means to *gain or win some for Christ*.
 - ◆ Many think that all that counts is bringing someone to faith so heaven is theirs.
 - ◆ Jesus' rescue plan is much bigger and fuller and richer than that.
 - Jesus wants to free people from the false, malicious, and enslaving masters - Satan and our sin loving self-absorbed selves.
 - Jesus wants us to find the freedom of serving him as Lord, not ourselves.
 - Jesus wants us to have the Life we were made for - with God as our God.
 - Goal: Jesus being our Lord - *living under him and his kingdom, serving him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness* - starting now.
 - ◆ If that doesn't sound like freedom and liberty to you - you have a simplistic, naive, and foolish view of freedom.
 - You haven't discovered the freedom of not being your own lord with all the responsibilities, fears, and failures that go with it.
 - Give up living to fight for your *rights* and for what is *fair*. Leave it to your Lord Jesus to defend, protect, bless, and enrich you.
 - Dig into discovering how Jesus sets you free from living your way.
 - Be infected by Jesus' servant heart and serve his mission to gain others for him.

That's what Christian freedom does. It serves in love.